



BOOK REVIEW OF
EVERYTHING SHE TOUGHT SHE WANTED
By ELIZABETH BUCHAN

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this final project is compiled by her without taking any result from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3, and in diploma degree of any universities. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except references mentioned.

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MOTTO AND DEDICATION

It is good to have an intelligent mind, but a kind heart is what matters

(Alexander K Taslim)

Power comes not from knowledge kept, but from knowledge shared

(Bill Gates)

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family

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The writer realizes that this thesis is still far from perfect. She, therefore, will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this book review better.

Finally, the writer expects that this project will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn about romance novel and the differences women in conventional and modern way.

Semarang, 28 August 2015

The writer

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1. Introduction

Women have always been interesting things to be discussed. A woman's heart is a deep ocean secret. And life always gives new stories, something that was unpredictable to be a part of the secret. Then, their story retold in a literary work called novel to inspire women around the world. A novel that the writer will discuss is written by Elizabeth Buchan, titled *Everything She Thought She Wanted*. This novel totaling 386 pages, published in 2004 by Penguin Books as *That Certain Age* in Great Britain and first published in the United States of America by Viking Penguin in 2005 and by Penguin Books in 2006 as *Everything She Thought She Wanted*. This novel has a feminist cover with the unique design and images of women stuff that reflects a conventional and modern style. The writer chooses *Everything She Thought She Wanted* to be reviewed because the writer finds it interesting to discuss about love and independence in this novel as the theme.

This novel tells the story of the lives of two married middle-aged women, Siena Grant and Barbara Beeching, about their struggle to maintain their families. This novel consists of twenty-six chapters. Each chapter contains the stories of Barbara and Siena alternately. With a wide range of problems that sometimes come unpredictable, even appears from herself. Here, loyalty, honesty, and their responsibilities as a wife are more highlighted. Between career and household, both difficult to be chosen, just like Siena's life starting the chapter. Charlie's desire for moving out of their apartment, having their own home and children brought Siena in a difficult position. Their first marriage has also become a trigger

debate. Their relation was getting better while Charlie moved to America. On the other side, the temptations come, started in third chapter. Barbara, a satisfied housewife with two grown children, was enchanted to Alexander, the young psychiatry student. His love increasingly, but in the other side he has an affair with Sophie, Ryder's nephew. Their relationship ends accompanied by the return of Alexander to Switzerland for his study.

The purpose of this book review is to explain the strengths and weaknesses of this novel by analyzing the theme and the character of the two main characters, Siena Grant who lives in the modern period and Barbara Beeching who lives in the conventional period. It is about the pursuit of happiness, the constraints of being a woman, the intricacies of marriage and family.

According to Barnes and Nobel.com/blog/about-Elizabeth, Elizabeth Buchan was born in 21 May 1948 in Guildford, Surrey, England. Elizabeth spent her childhood moving home every three years, including living for brief periods in Egypt and Nigeria before moving to Guildford, York and Edinburgh. She attended the University of Kent at Canterbury in the 1970's and earned a double degree in English and History. She began working as a blurb writer for Penguin Books in 1974. She did this for 15 years and then went on to become a Fiction Editor at Random House in 1989.

Elizabeth Buchan married Benjamin William Alastair Buchan in 20 April 1974. She has a son and a daughter, Adam Peter Alastair Buchan who was born in 1980, and a daughter Eleanor Rose Buchan who was born in 1983. Elizabeth Buchan's short stories are broadcast on BBC Radio 4 and published in magazines.

She reviews for the Sunday Times (UK) and has chaired the Betty Trask and Desmond Elliot literary prizes, and also been a judge for the Whitbread (now Costa) awards. She is a patron of the Guildford Book Festival and a past Chairman of the Romantic Novelists' Association from 1995 - 1997.

After the publication of her third novel titled *Consider the Lily* in 1993, she became a full-time writer. Her novel, *Revenge of the Middle Aged Woman* in 2002, has been made into a television film for CBS. Her novel titled *Separate Beds* made The New York Times Best Seller List for 2011.

The other works of Elizabeth Buchan's are: *Daughters of the Storm*(1988), *Light of the Moon* (1991), *Consider the Lily* (1993), *Perfect Love* (1995), *Against Her Nature* (1997), and *Secrets of the Heart* (2000), *The Good Wife* (2003) or *The Good Wife Strikes Back* in US title, *That Certain Age* (2004), *Separate Beds* (2010), *Daughters* (2012), the two of Mrs.Llyod series;*Revenge of the Middle-Aged Woman* (2003) and *The Second Wife* (2006) or *Wives Behaving Badly* in US title.

2. Summary of the Novel

In *Everything She Thought She Wanted* there were two women included; they were Siena Grant who was a business woman in the 20th-century, and Barbara Beeching who was a housewife in the 1950s. Siena Grant who lived in modern-day England had a highly successful career as fashion consultant. She lived with her husband, Charlie in their apartment in London. Charlie was a lawyer and he wanted to have a good family. Meanwhile, Barbara Beeching who

was 42 years old lived with her husband, Ryder and their children, Roy and Amy, in a charming country home in London. Ryder was a pilot and they had been married for twenty-four years.

Both Siena and Charlie had married before. It became one of the reasons why they were jealous of each other, but this was not the main problem. The main problem was Charlie wanted to have children and a house but Siena was not ready and she insisted to live in an apartment. The problem became more complicated when Siena got a job from a Trimester Productions, the American company which required her to move to America but Charlie didn't let her go. There was no day without quarreling. Then, Siena decided to pursue her career. Siena must be intensively round trip from America to London for what Charlie wanted. Their relationship is getting worse.

At least Charlie is also find a solution to maintain his marriage. A few weeks later Charlie tried to get a job in America and he got it. In America, he bought a house and Siena loved it. Finally Siena was ready to start to have family. They're both successful in their careers and they promised to love each other and be with each other for the rest of their lives.

Meanwhile, there was Barbara Beeching with her struggle to maintain the 24-years marriage that was almost failed because of her affair with Alexander, a dashing young psychiatry student. Their affair was lasted for several months without anyone knew, except Sophie, Ryder's niece. It was because Sophie felt in love with Alexander. That was why Shopie felt disappointed, and she wanted to tell Ryder about Barbara's love affair, but she didn't do it.

Barbara and Ryder were on a romantic trip to Switzerland for three days, but because of an unconditional situation, Ryder should back to work. She accompanied Ryder to the airport, then she went back to the hotel and was surprised when she knew that Alexander followed her to the hotel. They spend time for several days together. But it made Barbara realized her mistakes.

At last she realized that her love affair with Alexander was not a good thing, especially when she wanted to keep her marriage. She decided to end it. A few days later, Barbara knew that she was pregnant, meanwhile Alexander went to Switzerland for studying. Barbara decided to cover the truth, she had hidden it from Alexander and told Ryder about her pregnancy. Ryder, who didn't know about Barbara's love affair, was glad to hear about it. He assumed that it was his own son. In the end, Barbara had saved her marriage and start a new life with Ryder.

3. Review of *Everything She Thought She Wanted* By Elizabeth Buchan

In this review, the writer want to analyze the strengths and the weaknesses of the novel of *Everything She Thought She Wanted*. The strengths of this novel include character and theme.

3.1. Character

According to Kennedy in *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama* (Fifth Edition) (1991: 47), "A character is presumably an imagined person

who inhabits story.” Siena and Barbara as the two main characters are independence and tough women. They are described as in following.

3.1.1.Independence

Hornby in *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English* (1987: 763) have noted Independence as “*freedom to organize your own life and make your own decisions*”.

Elizabeth Buchan describes the two main characters, Siena and Barbara as powerful characters. They are tough woman, independence and wise in making decisions. The figure of **Siena** who lives in the modern period has strong personality. The passion she had for her work made all the difference. Siena described with certain words that make her very interesting, for example;

“Contracts, schedules, payment, publicity, anticipated audience . . . this was music to me: the andantes and crescendos of successful career.”(Buchan, 2004: 10)

We can easily understand Siena is a workaholic. She is always ambitious, focused and hard driving, but it makesher marriage didn’t work well. She is also wise in making decisions. There are so many things to consider while she decides to move to America because she would be separate from her husband. She should make deep personal choices in her lives to determine a career and to have a child.

The figure of **Barbara** who lives in the conventional period also has strong personality. She takes good care of Ryder, her children, and she also handles her household by herself. Her husband’s busyness makes her to be an independent because she always doing anything by herself.

"I made lists: Do pantry. Do sewing basket. Do spare-room wardrobe. On Ryder's birthday, I gave a bridge party, followed by dinner."(Buchan, 2004: 102)

She also improved her relationship with Amy without Ryder's interferences. She realized how difficult to have a daughter who are stubborn like Amy, but Barbara never give up. Absolutely it took several time to persuade Amy. At least she and Amy reconciled and Barbara fulfill Amy's wishes and cleared her matters. She makes Amy realize her mistakes, Amy even start the conversation in advance with Barbara after their quarreling and makes Barbara cries. There are the statement about what Amy said when she decided to make up with Barbara shown in the quotation:

*"I'd almost persuaded myself you didn't mean it".
"But, I did mean it," she contradicted me. "I have to be honest, I meant every word, but not in the way I said it. Not angrily and meanly. Did I hurt you mom? I want you to be honest with me, really honest. I think it's important we understand how each other's mind is working. Relations will be better between us."* (Buchan, 2004: 232)

3.1.2. Tough Woman

Hornby in *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1987) have noted Tough as "*strong enough to deal successfully with difficult conditions or situations.*" Elizabeth Buchan describes the two main characters, Siena and Barbara as a tough woman.

Siena is a tough woman that focuses on her own career, works hard to reach her dream as fashion consultant and get the project on American company. After failed in her first marriage and gets divorce, she is though, she put things back together and, after a year, she is involved with Charlie. It's also not

easy for Siena when Charlie asks to start a family and have a baby. In the same time, she get the project on America, absolutely; Charlie didn't give Siena permission to leave. But her responsibility for her partners insisted Siena to make a decision. She shows a lot of courage to live in America without Charlie and develop her career. She often comes back to London in the weekend, it's her way to improve her relationship. Charlie thought that it's better if they stay together. Then he find a job in America. Finally, Siena really appreciates his efforts and decides to start to have family.

"Waited for the baby that one day, I was sure (could I be sure?), yes, I was sure, would be born."(Buchan, 2004: 346)

In the end she decided to compromise with herself, she realizes her role as a wife and really make a deep personal choices in her lives. It shows that she keeps herself positive and strong to maintain her marriage, although what she's done is not as tough as her husband.

The figure of **Barbara** is also a tough woman, she's willing to do anything for her family. In fact, motherhood is one of the best proofs to show how strong and tough women can be. Despite her own stress, Barbara always attends to her to-do list, which usually involves the children and cares for her husband, Ryder. She always tries to provide what her husband wanted. It is shown when she explain her feeling in the quotation:

*"I blushed. "Having a baby is pretty bad.
"Actually, I lost two after Amy." It was rare that I confessed to that.
"Ryder was disappointed. He wanted another son. We tried again, and this time I was thankful and looking forward to it, did my best to make it happen. But it didn't, and I was quite ill for a long time afterwards. After that we agreed to let it be."
"Do you regret the decision?"*

I raised my eyes to his. "It's not that simple."(Buchan, 2004: 114)

The paragraph above shows that she even ignores her own feelings and still trying to realize the wishes of her husband to have another son. Losing a baby though miscarriage is one of the most difficult experiences that a parent, especially wife will ever endure. And it shows how selfish Ryder as a husband. It also shows that she is able to stand up for herself.

3.2.Theme

According to Kennedy in *An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry and Drama*(Second Edition) (1991: 144), "*Theme is whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals*". The theme of *Everything She Thought She Wanted* are love and independence.

3.2.1.Love

According to Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving*(2006: 2), "*Love is not a noun or object, but a verb or practice. How you practice love with those around you depends on your approach and understanding of the existential problems of your life and, at the same time, determines the wholeness you will experience as a human being.*"

3.2.2.The Power of Love

Love plays an important role in *Everything She Thought She Wanted* because many moments in the story start from something called love. Love is more easily experienced than defined. What love is depends on where you are in

relation to it. Love for parents, partners, children, country, neighbor, God and so on all have different qualities. Each has its variants, such as; blind, one-sided, tragic, steadfast, fickle, reciprocated, misguided, and unconditional. And love feels differently to every person who feels it. The writer suggests that the commitment is needed, all love is a kind a passionate commitment that we nurture and develop, even though it usually arrives in our lives unbidden. That's why it is more than just a powerful feeling. Love without the commitment, it is nothing. Love without the passion, it is just dedication. And love without nurturing, even the best can wither and die.

The Power Of Love can be applied in difficult situations to make things better. In fact, in many stories it's the solution to everything. There is no love without sacrifice, that is why a close relationships require sacrifice. In *Everything She Thought She Wanted*, Buchan wants to show that women are not as tough as man. There are alot of sacrifice needed to maintain the relationship. The two main characters has a sacrifice, but not as much as what their husbands does. However, the writer don't think all of the sacrifices made in this novel were made just for the sake of love.

The power of love, illustrated by **Siena** and **Charlie**. Based on the story, both Siena and Charlie have failed in their previous marriage. That is why they have more effort to maintain their second marriage and seek the best solution to resolve their problem. The problem they have is Charlie want to have children and a house but Siena was not ready and she insisted to live in an apartment. Siena also decided to leave London and moved to America. This makes Siena must be

intensively round trip from America to London. Charlie thinks that he had to do something for his wife. So, the first thing he did is deciding to move to America in order to be with his wife. Of course, leaving the work and move is really hard. Charlie needs several time to settle all of these. The best effort conducted by Charlie to Siena as shown in the quotation;

“Harry Liversedge has now formally invited me to join the chambers and I’ve accepted.”- “Ah... “I fumbled for the appropriate response.” That is... that’s a strategic move?”- “It’s meant to be.” (Buchan, 2004: 344)

“Siena, you must do as you like. If I can’t make you come around to my way of thinking, then I’ll have to live with it.” (Buchan, 2004: 345)

From the two paragraphs above, Charlie has tried the best effort to impress Siena and get her back. He still holds his career, it means that he still holds the responsibility as Siena’s husband. The second thing he does is to collect money to buy a house there; Siena impressed and appreciates over Charlie’s maturity and his love. Finally, Siena is touched by realizing a great sacrifice conducted by Charlie. How hard for Charlie to start a new career and a new life in America. Then, she decided to start having family.

“Waited for the baby that one day, I was sure (could I be sure?), yes, I was sure, would be born.” (Buchan, 2004: 346)

Their power of love makes both of them put their ego away, especially Siena. It is important to compromise on the problems that can’t be resolved. The ways to strengthen their relationship are conducted by Charlie, and he has maintained his marriage. He found the result of the sacrifices he made.

In another story, love comes unexpectedly. Throughout this story many sacrifices are made, some leading to love and some leading to downfall. These

kind of love illustrated by **Barbara, Ryder** and **Alexander**. When the relationship of Barbara and Ryder is not going really well, Alexander comes and fill the emptiness. Barbara and Ryder have been married for twenty-four years and they have an adult son, Roy and a daughter, Amy. But, there is a situation where love carried Barbara on an affair with a dashing young psychiatry student, Alexander. This is unconditional feeling which could not be handled by Barbara because Alexander is always trying to get her sympathy. Of course this is not justified. She shouldn't have an affair while she thought that she wasn't able to accept the risk of losing her husband and family.

In the other hand, Ryder who doesn't know about Barbara affairs thinks that his relationship with Barbara less harmonious because he's too busy with his work. Ryder try to make a solution, he plans a romantic trip to Switzerland to make their relationship better. Ryder also improves the loving relationship with his children. He blesses for the wedding of Roy and his girlfriend, Victoria; and with Barbara as a mediator between him and Amy, he allowed Amy to get the job as she likes. Ryder gives sincerity and trust to Barbara, that is why she doesn't want to make him disappointed and decided to end her love affair.

"Taking me up with him was Ryder's way of cementing our partnership. It was a token of his perfect trust, his belief in me; in putting my life in his hands, I gave him mine" (Buchan, 2004: 288)

"One day, you'll know just how good. As for me, I must think of Ryder, and try to make reparation."

"But if you weren't happy, you owe it to yourself. . ."

Oh, I was happy," I countered. "That's the point. I don't regret you for one second and, I hope, Ryder will never know, but I see so clearly now that I can't have you. It's not part of I am, what made Ryder and me." (Buchan, 2004: 289-290)

From the two paragraphs above, it is shown that Barbara wants to end her love affair and keep it as a secret. She realized that she did not want to lose Ryder. At least, the power of love makes Barbara realize that her love and obsession can make people around her such as Ryder, her children, and Sophie who felt in love with Alexander feel disappointed. When she finds herself pregnant, she doesn't tell that the baby is Alexander's son. By covering her pregnancy she was being unfair with the baby, Alexander and Ryder. Barbara won't hurt her family, but she hides her love affair and it can't prove that. The writer feels that what she has done is wrong. Barbara will not solve the problem by covering her mistakes. No matter how far she tries to run from her sin, it's always going to be there right behind her. She had to put her ego away because she realizes she shouldn't waste so much love from her family and by keeping her mistakes she would deceive herself.

3.3. The Weakness of *Everything She Thought She Wanted*

Everything She Thought She Wanted is the same as other books. It has strengths and weaknesses. This novel is recommended to read especially for women readers because it has an interesting story and makes us curious about what women want. We can take many positive messages and Buchan's way of describing the story is wonderfully entertaining but it still has several weaknesses.

The novel is written by the first point of view. Siena and Barbara become the two main characters in their own stories, and these stories are written from their point of view, so the themes are only told by them. They tell their own version and express their justification for themselves. The details in the novel are

not completed; the author did not describe where the event took place in precise and the person involved in details.

The author writes great story with flashback and forward plot in their internal and external conflicts, each story tells in chapters alternately but no link between them. The flashback and forward plot are a good thing, it less boring but it will create confusion. This is the same as combining two novel narrated into one. She tries to switch back and forth, starting on Siena for a few chapters, then returning to Barbara for a time. It makes rather disconcerting, the reader will assume that there is no connection between the two main characters. For instance, the story in chapter 1 and 2 begins with a conflict from Siena Grant's fear to having family. Then chapter 3 and 4, the conflict from Barbara Beeching started while she met Alexander Liberty in the Andrews's spring cocktail party. After that it goes back to the first meeting of Siena and Charlie and their previous marriage. In the next chapter the story goes back to the first meeting of Barbara and Ryder, and their conflict with their children. Then the story goes to Siena's career in America. The link between the two characters is revealed on the last chapter. The reader must give more attention because it will make the readers confused about setting, especially the setting of Siena's story where it moves from London to America and from America to London.

4. CONCLUSION

Everything She Thought She Wanted is one of Elizabeth Buchan's bestseller novels of women's fiction. This novel tells the story of the lives of two

married middle-aged women, Siena Grant and Barbara Beeching that inspired every woman in the world. This novel is really interesting because it has some strength such as characters that gives an example about independence and tough women and themes which explain about love in maturity and the power of love itself.

Eventhough Elizabeth Buchan's *Everything She Thought She Wanted* is an interesting novel with her inspiring story, it has flashback and forward plot which good, it less boring but it will create confusion. The novel also written by first point of view, so the themes are only told by Siena and Barbara as the main characters. They tell their own version and express their justification for themselves. That's why the readers should be cautious in accepting the message saved on it.

Everything She Thought She Wanted is really recommended for adult especially women readers. The characters can be such an inspiration for the readers that there is no happiness without love and how important family values. Since this novel brings the meaning of love to find a true happiness.

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